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SEAN KELLY/PENTAGON

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# DETENTE: THE PENTAGON VIEW

ANNCR:

CURRENT U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIPS, PARTICULARLY THE POLICY OF DETENTE, ARE UNDERGOING PERSISTENT RE-EXAMINATION IN THE UNITED STATES, PARTICULARLY IN CONGRESS AND IN THE NEWS MEDIA. IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT, THE VOA'S PENTAGON CORRESPONDENT, SEAN KELLY, EXAMINES HOW DEFENSE LEADERS ARE TAKING ACCOUNT OF THIS DEBATE.

VOICE:

IN THIS ELECTION YEAR, DETENTE, STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATIONS, GRAIN SALES -- IN SHORT, THE ENTIRE RANGE OF ISSUES IN THE COMPLEX U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP ARE NOW UP FOR GENERAL DEBATE.

THE QUESTIONS ABOUT DETENTE ARE ACKNOWLEDGED IN THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT'S ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT FORD'S REQUEST FOR INCREASED MILITARY SPENDING THIS YEAR. DEFENSE SECRETARY DONALD RUMSFELD APPEARED BEFORE CONGRESS THIS WEEK, ACCOMPANIED BY CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, AIR FORCE GENERAL GEORGE BROWN. BOTH MEN TALKED ABOUT DETENTE, WHICH THEY AGREED HAS COME TO MEAN A POLICY OF RELAXING TENSIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. HOWEVER, MISTER RUMSFELD THINKS THERE MAY BE SOME MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT WHAT DETENTE REALLY MEANS.

FIRST OF ALL, HE SAYS THERE IS NO INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN A POLICY OF DETENTE AND A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE. CITING VARIOUS USAGES OF THE TERM IN ITS ORIGINAL FRENCH, MISTER RUMSFELD NOTES THAT DETENTE HAS BEEN USED TO DESCRIBE

RELAXING THE TENSION ON A TAUT BOWSTRING, OR RELEASING THE HAMMER OF A COCKED PISTOL.

"IN NONE OF THESE MEANINGS," HE SAYS, "IS THERE ANY HINT THAT DETENTE MEANS FRIENDSHIP, TRUST, AFFECTION, OR ASSURED PEACE." DETENTE, SAYS SECRETARY RUMSFELD, "NEEDS TO BE UNDERSTOOD FOR WHAT IT IS: A WORD FOR THE APPROACH WE USE IN RELATIONS WITH NATIONS WHO ARE NOT OUR FRIENDS; WHO DO NOT SHARE OUR PRINCIPLES; WHOM WE ARE NOT SURE WE CAN TRUST; AND WHO HAVE GREAT MILITARY POWER AND HAVE SHOWN AN INCLINATION TO DRAW ON IT." IN SUBSEQUENT TESTIMONY BEFORE CONGRESS, MISTER RUMSFELD NOTED -- RATHER POINTEDLY -- THAT IT SHOULDN'T BE NECESSARY TO RELAX TENSIONS -- WITH FRIENDS.

IN HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE WORLD SITUATION, GENERAL BROWN OBSERVES THAT: "UNTIL RELATIVELY RECENTLY, DETENTE WAS SEEN BY MANY IN THE UNITED STATES AS AN END IN ITSELF, SIGNALING THE TERMINATION OF COLD WAR CONFRONTATION AND SYMBOLIZING THE BEGINNING OF A NEW AGE OF PEACE, FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION. FORTUNATELY," SAYS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, "THIS CONDITION NOW APPEARS TO HAVE SUBSIDED IN FAVOR OF A MORE BALANCED OUTLOOK, WHICH RECOGNIZES THE PITFALLS, AS WELL AS THE BENEFITS OF DETENTE."

"THE FACT REMAINS," SAYS GENERAL BROWN, "THAT THE RESPECTIVE POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHIES OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION ARE FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT." FURTHERMORE, HE SAYS, "SOVIET OBJECTIVES AND VALUES ARE, BY THEIR OWN ADMISSION, IN MANY WAYS INIMICAL TO OUR OWN."

BOTH SECRETARY RUMSFELD AND GENERAL BROWN WERE EXPRESSING THEIR VIEWS OF DETENTE AS SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT FORD'S ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND MILLION DOLLAR BUDGET FOR MILITARY SPENDING, A BUDGET THAT INCLUDES INCREASED FUNDS FOR MISSILES, BOMBERS, AND WARSHIPS. CRITICS OF DETENTE, AND CRITICS OF INCREASED MILITARY SPENDING WILL HAVE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT IN THE MONTHS AHEAD -- PARTICULARLY AS THE NOVEMBER ELECTION APPROACHES.

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